

# Abraham Lincoln

## An Essay

Read Before

The Philosophic Society, Lancaster, Pa., February 7, 1908

By

George W. Richards, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES,  
AT LANCASTER, PA.

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"To link my name with something that will redound  
to the interests of my fellow men, that is all I desire to  
live for."

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LANCASTER, PA.  
MCMVIII



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# Abraham Lincoln

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The general familiarity with the subject, the massiveness of the material and the traditional time-limits of this occasion make difficult a comprehensive treatment of the life and work of America's great emancipator. It will be conceded, however, that a man assumes national proportions by virtue of the magnitude of the problem with which he wrestles, the quality of character which he develops and the service which he renders his age. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to a consideration of three points: the Problem, the Man and the Solution.

## I. THE PROBLEM.

The problem was no less a task than the preservation of the Union. It had world-wide bearings. It involved the destiny of the West. Democracy itself was hanging in the balances. The man who could quell an incipient rebellion, harmonize discordant elements, and "preserve, defend and protect the Government" would win for himself a permanent place among the immortals of history.

The tendencies of disunion were found in the peculiar conditions of the colonial period. The thirteen colonies, which gradually crystallized out of the mass of pioneers on the Atlantic border, were both divided and united by geographical, national, social and religious barriers and bonds. They were far enough apart to become, under cer-

tain circumstances, squabbling republics, after the manner of ancient Greece or mediæval Italy. They were sufficiently attached to one another to become successively a League of Friendship, a Confederation of States and an organic and indissoluble Union. The realization of one or the other of these possibilities depended on the uncertain actions of men and on the logic of events. Men of keen insight into the history of nations and in close touch with their age, had decidedly adverse convictions about a union of the American colonies. Joseph Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester, said: "As to the future grandeur of America and its being a rising empire under one head, whether republican or monarchical, it is one of the idlest and most visionary notions that ever was conceived even by writers of romance. The natural antipathies and clashing interests of the Americans, their difference of government, habitudes and manners, indicate that they will have no center of union and no common interests." Frederick the Great agreed with the English Dean, and argued that the mere extent of the country, from Maine to Georgia, would suffice, either to break up the Union or to make a monarchy necessary. Washington himself was disturbed by these prophecies of evil, and secretly had his misgivings. It is clear that at best a union of states had to be effected by a process of growth rather than by a political fiat.

A brief survey of the territory and of the genius of the colonies brings to light the centrifugal and centripetal factors and forces. The variety of climate and soil, the irregularities in the coast line, the slope of the mountains and the course of the rivers were a natural basis for the sections known as the New England, Middle and Southern States, with the differentiated life and interests of their inhabitants. The diversity of social and religious tendencies appears in the constituent nationalities and creeds.

The Latin, Celt and Teuton contributed their portions to the embryonic nation. The dominant element was English, strongly influenced by a vigorous minority of Scotch-Irish, Dutch, Swedes, Germans, French and Swiss. They represented every type of modern Christianity—the Pilgrim and the Puritan, the Anglican and the Catholic, the Baptist and the Quaker, the Lutheran and the Reformed, the Moravian and the Methodist. In those days national and religious distinctions were taken far more seriously than at present. They provoked antagonisms which not infrequently resulted in violence and blood. The selectmen of Boston ordered the Scotch-Irish to leave the town. The Quakers regarded with suspicion a people who turned to the Book of Joshua for an Indian policy. The Germans were treated with contempt by the English. Free Massachusetts pointed the finger of scorn at slave-holding South Carolina. So different was the social and political organization of the colonies, that a stiff and stubborn pride in their respective institutions became an impassable wall of separation. The people were jealous of their territorial rights. Bitter feuds sprang up on account of boundary lines. The difficulties of travel, the lack of a common literature, the isolation of communities thinly scattered from Maine to Georgia, lent themselves to the petty and contemptible antipathies of the early settlers.

In spite of these differences, there were points of contact and bonds of fellowship which held the colonies together. The territory which divided, also united, them. The racial unity was stronger than national diversity. The religious differences were surface lines. Unity of faith and purpose was found in the center and depth of the American churches. The hardships of a wilderness, the necessities of life, the presence of a common foe prowling in the forests, the recognition of the authority of a mother country, the spread of

the Great Awakening, the rise of eminent native Americans who belonged to no colony and were the pride of all, the general uprising against foreign oppression, fostered the spirit of unity or "the will-to-be-one" in the people.

Still the creation of an indissoluble union from a chaos of colonies was the task of a century. In their groping after federation, before the Revolution of '76, the colonies at most yielded only what was absolutely necessary for coöperation. Every suggestion of a complete fusion was rejected with decisive and ever-increasing emphasis. The individualism, which developed in the clearing of forests, the breaking of ground, and the building of towns, was naturally suspicious of a central government. This spirit of independence was equally strong in Rhode Island and in Virginia, in men like Samuel Adams and Richard Henry Lee. Even after the Revolution the continuance of the Confederation seemed by no means assured. The Constitutional Convention of 1787 was confronted by almost insuperable obstacles. It was divided into a number of parties. Some were made up of individuals, others of States. Some wanted a federal government much like the one they had during the war; others did not want a confederacy at all. Some stood for a strong central authority, and others guarded the sovereignty of the state. The Southern States were against the Northern, the commercial States against the agricultural, the great States against the small. To meet the difficulties, three different constitutional drafts were submitted. The first is known as the Virginia plan, by Randolph; the second, the South Carolina plan, by Charles Pinckney; and the third, the New Jersey plan, by Patterson. In the course of the debate feeling ran high and threats of leaving the convention were frequent. Some of the delegates went home in disgust and others offered concessions in vain. A constitution could be adopted



only by the policy of compromise. The little States allowed proportional representation to the great States. The free States gave representation to the negro in the slave State, counting a negro three-fifths of a white man. The agricultural and commercial States were conciliated by mutually satisfactory regulations of the slave trade and of commerce.

The ratification by the States was delayed by lukewarmness and stubborn resistance. Malcontents held popular meetings and stirred up disaffection and strife. North Carolina held out against the Constitution for two years, and Rhode Island had to be coerced into submission by threats. Two political parties arose, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, each one standing for a definite conception of the authority of the central government over the States. The Union was thus created but not completed. The policy of compromise concealed for a time the tension between its several sections, but compromise did not solve the latent difficulties. The question which disturbed national politics for generations to come was that of State Rights. Was the new instrument of government a Constitution of the United States or of the States united? Upon the answer to this question depends the right of nullification or of secession when States are dissatisfied with an act of the national government, or the right of the government to coerce rebellious States into submission to the Union. At the opening of the nineteenth century few statesmen, North or South, would have been bold enough to have gainsaid the prerogative of a State to secede. A half a century later the scales turned and secession was considered a crime against the Constitution.

The occasion for the assertion of the doctrine of State Rights came more than once in the early history of the Republic. When the Alien and Sedition Laws were passed the Legislatures of Virginia and Kentucky officially pro-

claimed this prerogative. It was not a theory confined to the South alone. It was held by all the States and was affirmed without reserve when the well-being of one or more was imperilled. With the success of the Anti-Federalists, in 1801, the struggle with England seriously embarrassed the industrial interests of the North, especially of New England. Then the Federalists became champions of State Rights and put into their political platforms the identical resolutions of Virginia and Kentucky.

But the great cause for division was temporarily veiled by circumlocutory phrases in the Constitution itself. It was the special interest of the slave holders in the Southern States. Slavery furnished the motive for the logical development of state sovereignty and for the translation of the theory into practice. There was historical philosophy as well as popular poetry in the third stanza of Whittier's Battle Hymn:

“What gives the wheat field blades of steel?  
What points the rebel cannon?  
What sets the grinding rabble's heel  
On the old star spangled pennon?  
What breaks the oath of the men of the South?  
What whets the knife of the Union's life?  
Hark to the answer, Slavery!”

Lincoln, in his first inaugural, reiterates this sentiment in plain prose: “One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it wrong, and ought not to be extended—the only substantial dispute.”

Two aspects of the question of slavery must be considered for the understanding of its full significance. The first is its introduction, location and firm hold on a portion of our territory. The second is the rise and spread of anti-slavery sentiment, with its various shades of view and its

divers forms of organization. When the Dutch man-of-war sailed into the harbor of Jamestown, in 1619, with twenty African slaves on board, there appeared a cloud on the American horizon not bigger than a man's hand but portending an inevitable storm. Slavery was then a fact and a force in the New World. The apple of discord was cast. The institution spread rapidly over the South. The climate, soil, plantations, and social ideals favored its growth. The geographical, social and religious conditions of the Middle and Northern States were, to say the least, not conducive to its perpetuity. The Western pioneers, largely under the influence of Northern ideas, were averse to it and did not find it profitable. To summarize: the power of custom, the grip of an inherited social order, the invention of the cotton gin, the deep-rooted pride of the Southern aristocracy, which could brook no opposition and resented every form of dictation, the stinging moral censures of Northern abolitionists, and the pecuniary advantages accruing from slavery united in making it an indispensable necessity to the Southern man.

In colonial days slavery was not justified on moral grounds. The institution was regarded unmoral and inhuman. Men of the North and the South spoke against the iniquitous practice. In 1700 Judge Samuel Sewall issued the first public denunciation of slavery in a pamphlet. In 1688 the Mennonites of Germantown drew up the first petition against it. George Mason of Virginia said: "Slavery discourages arts and manufactures." Thomas Jefferson, in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, made it one of the chief articles of indictment against George III., that he "prostituted his negative for suppressing every legitimate attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable traffic." In 1787 he wrote: "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and that His justice cannot sleep forever."

At the close of the eighteenth century, all the States north of Maryland had put slavery out of existence. After the national government was organized numerous petitions were submitted to Congress seeking its restriction or abolition. Congress, however, declared that it had no power to interfere with slavery or the treatment of slaves within the States. The war of pamphlets began. With the opening of the nineteenth century, all the paraphernalia of the later anti-slavery movement were in use—societies, petitions, laws, and deliberate violations of laws. The abolition sentiment was nurtured and spread by ceaseless agitation. At first it divided the South against itself, and the North against itself. Then South and North were divided against each other. Old parties were split and new parties were formed. This process of division, segregation and consolidation is clearly discernible in the salient acts and movements of the nation from the Revolution to the Rebellion.

The admission of new States into the Union intensified sectional feeling. The South realized that the maintenance of the balance of power in Congress was the safeguard of slavery. Its perpetuity depended on its extension into new territory. The creation of States out of the vast region beyond the Mississippi was bound to disturb the time-honored equilibrium. The Missouri Compromise was a temporary political armistice, but agitation against slavery could not be restrained by statutes. Public sentiment eludes and laughs at legislatures. The American Colonization Society of 1816 and the American Anti-Slavery Society of 1833 were well-meant palliatives but not cures for the disease. Garrison took the advanced ground of immediate abolition throughout the United States, because slavery was morally wrong and, therefore, ought not to be tolerated anywhere. The ethical aspect of the question

appealed more and more to the people. Feeling became so intense on both sides, North and South, that threats of secession were heard in Massachusetts as well as in South Carolina. When, in 1845, Garrison proposed that New England should withdraw from the Union unless slavery was abolished, he was applauded to the echo. Calhoun demanded that the balance of power must be restored in the House or the Union must be dissolved. The political heroes of a passing era once more came from retirement to guide the storm-tossed Ship of State and pour the oil of compromise on the angry sea. They cried, "peace," but there was no peace. Seward, Sumner and Chase struck a new note and heralded the dawn of a new period. The "irrepressible conflict" was at hand. Free-soil Whigs and free-soil Democrats organized and acted with grim determination. The deceptive peace of the compromise of 1850 was rudely disturbed by a quick succession of significant events—the announcement of the doctrine of Popular Sovereignty, the Dred Scott Decision, the Lecompten Constitution, John Brown's Raid and the election of the Republican candidate for the presidency, Abraham Lincoln.

The exigencies of the hour, no less than the gradual consummation of a political and moral process, required the pursuance of a new policy in the treatment of the central national question. The Union was created and preserved up to this time by compromise. Never was there an ordinance passed, from 1787 to 1850, which squarely faced the issue and consistently expressed the convictions, either of the pro-slavery or of the anti-slavery men. Circumspect statesmen felt it their paramount mission to maintain at any cost cordial relations between the North and the South. But under the cover of expediency there grew up individuals and societies who represented logical and ethical consistency. They spoke in unvarnished terms and blew a

trumpet of no uncertain sound. On the one side, it must be abolition or war; on the other, slavery or secession. The champion of uncalculating consistency, who rose above the puritanical radicalism and political moderatism of the North as well as the aristocratic pride and sectional arrogance of the South and represented no single party but stood for all the people, came from the fresh, vigorous, homely and untutored West. The prophet of the new order announced his message in the Springfield, Ill., Convention of 1858, when he said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other." When Lincoln read these words to a coterie of advisers before he spoke them on the following day, they were thrown into consternation. Defeat was sure to follow such an untimely and immoderate utterance. But he calmly replied: "I should rather be defeated with this expression in the speech than be victorious without it." He lost the senatorship but he gained the presidency. The man of the hour had come into national politics.

Let us briefly summarize the results of history. They, indeed, fail to comprehend the gravity of the situation which confronted Buchanan and Lincoln whose vision is limited by the sixth decade of the century, and who contend that the problem could have been solved by a single decisive stroke. The controversy, which threatened to drench the land with fraternal blood, was the outcome of economic and moral processes extending over more than a century. For a time the different sections of the new Republic felt the pulses of growth and expansion and were bound together by the enthusiasm of youth and the sense of a community

of interests. The political honors were being equitably distributed between the North and the South by their leading statesmen, who planned nominations and directed elections by caucus and correspondence. The Southern statesmen in the beginning were warm supporters of national expansion, a moderate tariff, and a diversification of industries. But in the course of a few decades they discovered to their sorrow that they were the heirs of a social system which barred them from the great change and growth which shaped the rising nation. The South stood still in a fixed order. It passionately resisted change. Slavery so crystallized the classes and the customs of the South, that it was wholly incapable of adjusting itself to the industrial revolution which was transforming and unifying the East and the West. The population of the country grew, in the decade from 1830 to 1840, from thirteen to seventeen millions, and the immigration trebled. But the population of the South increased scarcely at all. The winning of the West changed the aspect of the national question. From its borders came the Jacksonian Democracy, protesting against the traditional rule of an aristocracy of New Englanders and Southerners. Coming to a consciousness of its own resources, the West felt that in its hands was the balance of power in national elections. The Free-soilers and the Anti-slavery men multiplied in geometrical progression. The Mississippi Valley was rapidly filled up with settlers and enriched by the products of a fertile soil and a variety of industries which sprang up in a night. In these regions slavery had a precarious existence. Even the native Southerner, coming into the Western prairies, gave up his social and political traditions, liberated his slaves, and was absorbed by the new environment. Two antagonistic and irreconcilable forms of political life gradually grew up under the protection of one constitution and government.

A house so divided against itself could not stand. The hidden dualism became the fontal source of secret prejudice and open conflict. Now it came to light in the nullification of tariff laws, and then in the threats of secession and in the war of the Rebellion. Time did not heal the breach. The tender offices of the greatest statesmen failed. The issues of the conflict became clearer and more difficult to settle. The hour arrived when an appeal had to be taken from the House, the Judiciary and the popular assembly to the field of battle, and judgment had to be written in blood. No iron-willed Jackson could have held in leash the Dogs of War, nor could legislative action have averted the terrific storm.

## II. THE MAN.

We shall now consider the man into whose hands the government was entrusted. In response to a request for the facts of his early life, Mr. Lincoln replied: "It can all be condensed into a single sentence and that sentence you will find in Gray's Elegy, 'The short and simple annals of the poor.'" The line of his paternal ancestors extends from Kentucky through Virginia, Pennsylvania, New England, to Norfolk county, England. Quaker and Puritan blood flowed in his veins, a fact which his father, Thomas, indignantly resented. For six generations the Lincolns were pioneers in the settlement of new countries. They shared the fortunes and misfortunes of the wilderness. His mother, Nancy Hanks, was the natural child of a Virginia planter, a woman of strong mind whose memory her son loved to honor. To her he traced whatever mental power he inherited. His father was shiftless and ignorant. He usually failed where everybody succeeded. True to the migratory instinct of his tribe, he moved successively from Kentucky to Indiana and from Indiana to Illinois,



seeking rest and finding none. When the family reached the banks of the Sangammon, Abraham had passed his twenty-first birthday.

His scholastic education was limited to four months of instruction by unlettered masters in log school houses. Though he was not taught in the schools, he nevertheless learned letters. His thirst for knowledge was irrepressible. Neither his poverty nor his illiterate surroundings could prevent his mental growth. His library consisted chiefly of borrowed books, and their number is easily told. His biographers find traces in his youth of *Æsop's Fables*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a history of the United States, two lives of Washington (the one by Weems, the other by Ramsay), the *Lives of Clay* and of *Franklin* and a copy of *Shakespeare's Plays* and of *Burns' Poems*. He knew his Bible well and in early manhood mastered Euclid. He was an intensive rather than extensive reader, a man of one book. His mathematical problems and his early compositions he inscribed on a wooden shovel by the hearth, and shaved off the scrawls with a draw-knife to repeat the performance. At an early age he wrote verse and satirical prose, but the productions were coarse and "too indecent for publication."

He was trained chiefly in the rough surroundings of the frontier community. From childhood he was compelled to struggle for life. He was never industrious and the neighbors called him lazy. He took delight in lounging, telling stories, talking politics, reading books, attending parties and making speeches. He changed his occupation frequently. He did the odd jobs that came his way: slaughtered hogs at thirty-one cents a day, cleared forests, split rails, conducted a flat boat to New Orleans, managed a store, acted as postmaster, commanded a company of soldiers, was assistant surveyor and served in the State Legis-

lature. After his admission to the bar at Springfield he won an enviable reputation as a lawyer, but he loved politics better than law. He stumped the state for Harrison and Tyler, debated with Douglas and was elected to Congress in 1846. These are the salient facts of his life before he became a presidential possibility.

By nature and training he had great physical strength and endurance. He was tall, six feet three and one-half inches in his stockings, brawny, large-boned and awkward, "the largest and strongest of them all." The prodigious feats which legend ascribes to him would adorn the histories of Samson and Milo. He never lost his almost childlike pride in the height of his stature. Mr. Sherman relates, in his Memoirs, how he first met Mr. Lincoln the evening after his arrival in Washington, in 1861. "When introduced to him," says Mr. Sherman, "he took my hands in both of his, drew himself up to his full height and looking at me steadily, said: 'You're John Sherman. Well, I'm taller than you. Let's measure.' Thereupon we stood back to back and someone present announced that he was two inches taller than I. This was correct." He could not well conceal his contempt for short men. When he met the undersized Vermonter, Douglas, in 1844, he sneeringly said he was the "least man" he had ever seen. He broke the solemnity of the Hampton Roads Conference by passing a comment on the size of Alexander Stephens. The little Southern commissioner, eighty pounds in weight, protected his frail body against the mid-winter cold with a profusion of overcoats and wraps. In the warm cabin of the steamer *River Queen* he pulled off layer after layer. When he finally emerged, Lincoln said, in an undertone, to the Secretary of State: "Seward, that is the largest shucking for so small a nubbin that I ever saw." The time came when his gigantic body served him in good stead for bearing

the burdens of a distracted nation, which rested so heavily upon him.

Intellectually and morally he showed no evidence of extraordinary genius; still he cultivated the basal virtues of true manhood. He was honest, sober, sympathetic, thoughtful, generous and soundly ambitious. In each stage of his life he showed capacity for leadership and proved himself master of his environment. He was in a measure the creature of circumstances, but he was far more the creator of new conditions. He kept in close touch with the people *en masse*. First, with the villagers in the frontiers; then, the citizens of Illinois; and finally, the nation itself. He passed in his lifetime through all the grades of American civilization—from the open-faced cabin to the cottage, from the cottage to the mansion; from homespun to broadcloth, from the grocery store to the Legislature, from the debating society to the political platform, from the bar to the White House. He became, in a sense, the first typical American, a child of the West. His strength increased with the magnitude of the task which was before him. His latent capacity seemed inexhaustible. He was not a scholar, but he had wisdom. He lacked the graces of polite society, but he was a gentleman. He was genial, affable and jovial; still he was reserved, cautious and secretive—"a sceptered hermit, wrapped in the solitude of his own originality." He was guileless in exterior habit; still he was sagacious and diplomatic. He was deferential and ever ready to listen and to learn, but formed his own conclusions and was immovable after he reached a decision. In finance he failed and in love he hardly succeeded. In maturer years he developed an unusual power for the analysis and penetration of a subject. He grasped the core of an argument and stated it concisely and clearly. Mr. Whitney says: "In clearness and facility of statement

he was like Webster or Jefferson; in remorseless logic, like Calhoun or John Quincy Adams; in fiery and impetuous denunciation, like Clay or Blaine; yet he excelled them all in simplicity and terseness."

He leaned by nature toward the true and the good. He was an Israelite without guile. He revolted from cruelty and craft. He never drank liquor nor smoked tobacco. His temperance speeches are still on record. He was the defender of the abused and the distressed. He was a poor advocate of a bad cause. He keenly felt the injustice of slavery. While he was in New Orleans, he witnessed the sale of a mulatto girl. He remarked to a friend by his side: "If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." His highest ambition, to quote his own language, was "to connect my name with the events of my day and generation, and so impress myself upon them as to link my name with something that will redound to the interests of my fellow-men. That is all I desire to live for."

He was an apostle of the "square deal" and "of fair play." He did the right as he saw the right. His vision was not always clear, but his purpose was good. The secret of his life is found in the homely title which the townsmen of New Salem gave him in his youth—"honest Abe." He was forever honest, whether he clerked in a store, wrestled in the ring, argued with Douglas, or administered the affairs of a nation. Neither friend nor foe questioned his sincerity. True, Douglas was more brilliant as an orator, but when he sat down, men said, "is he honest?" When Lincoln finished his argument, men cried, "he is honest!" That conviction grew upon his countrymen, exalted him to the highest office in the gift of the nation, and won for him the affection of a distressed and scattered people in the darkest days of the Republic. He never lost faith in the people. Mr. Bancroft says: "As a child, in a dark night, on a rugged

way, clutches hold of the hand of its father for guidance and support, he clung fast to the hand of the people and moved calmly through the gloom." Such mutual confidence of leader and followers inspired and throbbed in the national slogan, "We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand strong!"

Lincoln was never a churchman. In his youth he was tainted with skepticism. At the age of twenty-five he wrote an extended essay against Christianity with a view to its publication. He was then under the influence of Thomas Paine. A friend, who acted more wisely than he knew, took the manuscript from the author's hand and cast it into the fire. There was a time when he doubted the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity of Christ. When his intermittent spells of melancholy settled upon him and wrapped him in impenetrable gloom, he questioned even the existence of a personal God and of a future life. But he was always serious, reverent and tolerant. He highly respected the religious convictions of others. Tertullian would have classed him with those who are "naturally Christian." His public writings, addresses, and state papers not only sparkle with scriptural allusions, but reveal a marked change, in mature manhood, in his attitude toward eternal realities. He then had firm faith in God, in Providence, in a moral order, in prayer and in the ultimate victory of truth and righteousness. In his letter of acceptance of the first presidential nomination, he implores the "assistance of Divine Providence." In his inaugural addresses, in his messages to Congress and in his proclamations of national thanksgivings, times without number he recognizes the power, the wisdom, the mercy and the justice of God. A man of his breadth of sincerity, however, was naturally repelled by the sectarianism and bigotry which afflicted the churches of his day. He once said:

"When any church will inscribe over its altar as its own qualification for membership, the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul."

Until 1856, when Lincoln was forty-seven years of age, neither his personal attainments nor his official position indicated the necessary qualifications for national leadership. He was a lawyer, indeed, of more than local repute. He had won fame as a stump speaker and political debater. In his single term in Congress he never rose above a respectable mediocrity. When the Republican party was organized, in 1856, he lived in comparative obscurity and was overshadowed by men whose names were household words from coast to coast—Seward and Sumner, Fremont and Chase, Banks and Bissell. But in the Bloomington Convention he sprang into unexpected prominence and henceforth moved with rapid strides toward the high goal. He outdid the great Nebraskan Commoner himself by delivering a speech which held his hearers in breathless attention and inspired enthusiasm which found vent in exclamations, cheers and applause. Reporters dropped their pencils and forgot their note-books, but the sentiments which he uttered never perished from the memory of his audience. Illinois awakened to the fact that it had reared a big giant as well as a "little giant." The latent powers of Lincoln's mind were aroused to action and his face was set toward Washington. The newspapers announced him as a presidential possibility. At the Philadelphia Convention in June he polled 110 votes as a nominee for the vice-presidency. He was then chosen by the Republicans of his state as the most formidable candidate for the United States senator-

ship against the Star of the Democracy, Stephen A. Douglas. In seven joint debates Lincoln proved himself a master of the Constitution, a safe exponent of Republicanism, and a foeman worthy of the steel of the most brilliant statesman of the West, if not of the country. Without Douglas, Lincoln might have died unhonored and unsung. The "little giant" became a stepping stone to higher things; for, while he was arguing with Douglas before the people of Illinois, he was, in his own words, "playing for larger game." He made statements which at the time the public was not ready to receive. Douglas was elected to the senatorship, but Lincoln advanced a step toward the White House.

He had now become sufficiently great to attract the attention of the Young Men's Republican Association of Brooklyn, which invited him to deliver an address in Plymouth Church. The coveted, and still dreaded, privilege of standing before a metropolitan audience had come. He delivered his famous Cooper-Union speech. Notwithstanding his brand new suit of ready-made clothes, with pantaloons and coat sleeves cut too short and wrinkled and creased by several days' pressure in a handbag, Lincoln captivated the social and political lions of the metropolis. The aftermath in the Athenæum Club is described as follows: "Lincoln was the hero of the hour. There was no formality, but there was indeed 'a feast of reason and a flow of soul,' which lasted till the 'wee sma' hours.' Mr. Lincoln was perfectly at home. He 'tauld his queerest stories,' and the solemn walls of the club had never echoed to such hilarity. When the party broke up and two gentlemen escorted Lincoln to the Astor House, everyone was pleased with himself and with all mankind." He made a tour through New England and won the admiration of the fastidious East. The Professor of Rhetoric of Yale College heard his speech at New Haven and analyzed its fine rhetoric and powerful logic before his class the next day.

When the Chicago Convention met, Lincoln was no longer a dark horse but a candidate who loomed up so prominently that Seward might well fear him above every other rival. All the political machinery of such occasions was set in motion and his nomination was achieved not "without adroit and astute political skill and management." On the third ballot the long cherished presidential aspirations of the idol of the Empire State were blasted, and by formal motion of Mr. Evarts, Abraham Lincoln was unanimously nominated for the presidency of the United States by the Republican party.

In the election of November 6, 1860, the people ratified the choice of the Chicago Convention, and on December 5th, 180 electoral votes for Lincoln gave him a majority of 57 votes over Breckenridge, Bell and Douglas.

It was one thing, however, to carry a popular election and win the presidency; another thing to reconcile and reward his rivals; to crystallize the strength of the loyal States, to suppress an unprecedented secession which was rapidly sweeping the nation into war, and to steer clear of the enthusiasm of friends and the apathy of foes. The wisdom of his election had to be vindicated by the achievements of his administration.

### III. THE SOLUTION.

Never did a president take the oath of office with greater difficulties before him, and with less means at his command to cope with them. Six States were in open secession, taking steps to organize an independent confederacy and gathering their forces for war. His predecessor, rightly or wrongly, was charged with indecision and treasonable sympathy with the Southern conspirators. The president-himself, was not an experienced statesman and lacked the confidence of even the Republican leaders. The four par-



ties in the campaign had spread the spirit of division over the land and increased sectional jealousy and dissension. The people, in the enjoyment of long years of peace, had forgotten the arts of war. From an empty treasury resources were to be drawn beyond precedent in the history of finance. The trees were still in the forests and the iron in the earth with which a navy was to be built. The regular army was a mere handful of men stationed on the frontiers. Experienced commanders deserted to the Southern cause, and undisciplined officers were to transform a mob into an army in a month. The public opinion of Europe was skeptical or hostile. The North was honeycombed with secessionists as the South was with Unionists. The Ship of State was drifting, and, like Cardinal Newman, when he was fog-bound on the Mediterranean, men looked for the

“Kindly Light amid the encircling gloom.”

The question was, not how to make war, but how to preserve peace. It was not a time for precipitate action, but for cautious deliberation and patient forbearance. The partisan, wise fifty years after the event, complacently outlines an invincible policy and in the solitude of his comfortable library, with the ringlets of a delicious Havana circling peacably above his head, puts his foot on the viper of secession, turns on his heel, and lo! the rebellion is crushed and the Union saved forever. “Was not the South in secession?” he cries. “Did not the governors of the seceded States send military forces to demand the surrender of the feebly-garrisoned federal forts within their domains? Did they not take possession of arsenals, custom houses, mints and other public buildings and property of the United States?” History answers “yes.” But neither the North nor the South was prepared for a declaration of war before every expedient of peace was exhausted. So long

had Southern threats of disunion served as a party menace, that they ceased to terrify the North. Even the recent more formal policies of Southern legislatures and conventions appeared as spectacular manifestations to extort compromise and concession from Northern voters. The people of both sides not only hoped, but believed, that again, as so often before, the quarrel could be allayed by compromise. To this end both the House and the Senate appointed committees to devise measures of reconciliation and peace. But the seven plans before the one, and the forty before the other failed to obtain the assent of the majority. For the same purpose a peace convention, composed of delegates sent by the governors of fourteen States of the Union, sat in the city of Washington from February 4th to February 27th, but the convention adjourned without reaching practicable conclusions. Chapters of history were made almost daily. The issue stood out in bolder relief and in sharper antithesis week after week. Southern senators and representatives gradually withdrew from their seats in Congress. The secessionists, on February 4th organized a provisional Congress; on February 8th formed a provisional government known as the Confederate States of America; and on March 11th adopted a permanent constitution. Men hoped against hope that peace might be restored, but their dearest hopes were blasted and their worst fears realized.

At this juncture, neither Lincoln nor his advisors, either before or after the inauguration, could have had a clearly-defined and irreversible plan of action. The condition of affairs was too intricate and too greatly dependent upon incalculable and uncontrollable contingencies even for the most far-sighted statesman to have been able to move in a straight line and to see the end from the beginning. In the interim from his election to the bombardment of Fort

Sumter, the attitude of Lincoln was one of *prudent reserve*. He was equally great in his determination to stand and wait and in his decision to advance and act. The spirit of his first inaugural is tolerant and irenic, yet firm and resolute. He assures "the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican administration, their property and their peace and personal security are not to be endangered." He declares that he "has no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so and I have no inclination to do so." He reiterates the resolution of the Republican platform, "that the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions, according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion of armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest crimes." He emphatically affirms, however, that "no State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union," and announces in unmistakable language his purpose to preserve the Union intact. But he adds: "In doing this there must be no bloodshed and violence, and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority."

In the conclusion of his address he pleads for peace. "My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and well upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If it were admitted that you, who are dissatisfied, hold the right side in the dispute, there is no single good reason for precipitate action. Indulgence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulties."

Further quotations are unnecessary to show that Lincoln did not breathe defiance or thrust the mailed fist into the faces of the secessionists. His purpose was to exhaust "all peaceable measures before a resort to any stronger ones." But he was, at the same time, irrevocably pledged "to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts." He solemnly declared "that to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States." War or no war, these declarations could not be retracted. Men of the South, who heard the inaugural, caught its martial undertone. On March 5th, Mr. L. Q. Washington wrote from the capital to the Confederate Secretary of War: "I was present last evening at a consultation of Southern gentlemen, at which Messrs. Crawford, Garnett, Pryor, De Jarrette of Virginia, and Wigfall of Texas were present. We all put the same construction on the inaugural, which we carefully went over together. We agreed that it was Lincoln's purpose at once to attempt the collection of the revenues, to reinforce and hold Fort Sumter and Pickens, and to retake the other places. He is a man of will and firmness."

His deliberate action and the evidences of his independent leadership appear in the conduct of the transactions relating to Fort Sumter. Major Anderson reported that his provisions would be exhausted in a few weeks, and requested a force of not less than 20,000 good and well-disciplined men to relieve him. Remembering that there were only 17,113 officers and men in the regular army and that these were scattered in small detachments along the western frontiers, it is clear that the request of Anderson could not be granted. The administration was in a sore

dilemma. Lieutenant-General Scott, after consultation with the officers of the army and the navy, reported that "evacuation seems almost inevitable, and in this view our distinguished chief engineer concurs." The cabinet, with the exception of Postmaster-General Blair, agreed with the experts of the army. But after Lincoln's promise "to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government," the abandonment of Sumter would be utterly ruinous. "At home it would discourage the friends of the Union, embolden its adversaries and go far to ensure to the latter recognition abroad." With a keen sense of his predicament, Lincoln said: "When Anderson goes out of Fort Sumter, I shall have to go out of the White House." Since reinforcement was an absolute impossibility, the alternative of starving or withdrawal of the garrison presented itself. When the *provisioning* of Fort Sumter was proposed, only three of the cabinet were favorable. Seward was inflexible in his opposition. Lincoln, however, announced that "he must send bread to Anderson." In spite of positive protests from high authority, he ordered the despatch of a relief expedition, but not without due notice to the governor of South Carolina. The assurance was given that if the attempted relief would not be resisted, "no effort to throw in men, arms or ammunition" would be attempted until further notice or in case of attack. Even at this stage he did not play the aggressor toward the secessionists, but acted on the defensive. In his special message of July 4, 1861, he does not leave us in doubt on this point, when he tells us that he "sought only to hold the public places and property not already wrested from the government and to collect the revenues, relying for the rest on time, discussion and the ballot box."

Far be it from us to presume to measure swords with the brilliant essayist of the last *Cliosophic*. He would be rash,

indeed, who would rush into the lists to try his strength with one whose blade is so keen and whose stroke so true. It is only as a victim of circumstances, from which we would fain run away, but by which we are inextricably entangled, that we venture to consider the relation between the policy of Buchanan and of Lincoln before the attack on Sumter. Who could fail to admire the chivalrous gallantry of our distinguished townsman when he cited the notable historians of America and found them arrayed against him like a wall of adamant? We have found, however, another son of Pennsylvania who has championed the cause of the ill-fated Buchanan. He was never in political sympathy with him, nor did any personal affection warp his judgment. Mr. A. K. McClure, thirty years after Buchanan's retirement, wrote: "It will surprise many at this day when I say that Abraham Lincoln took up the reins of government just where James Buchanan left them, and continued precisely the same policy toward the South that Buchanan had inaugurated, until the Southern leaders committed the suicidal act of firing on Fort Sumter."

To do justice to this view we must not forget the epoch-making effect of the assault on Anderson. It clarified the vision of our statesmen and changed the whole problem in the North and the South. Then, too, a comparison between antipodal men like Buchanan and Lincoln is almost impossible without doing injustice to both. Their parentage, early training, intellectual and social characteristics, political allegiance and official experience were as far apart as the East is from the West. In the critical period before the election and the inauguration of Lincoln days were years and months decades. No one can tell what Buchanan would have done two months later; or Lincoln, three months earlier. The former, however, has put himself on record, in a letter to Mr. Baker, April 26, 1861, saying: "The

attack on Fort Sumter was an outrageous act. The authorities of Charleston were several times warned by my administration that such an attack would be civil war and would be treated as such. If it had been made in my time, it should have been treated as such." This *ex post facto* utterance is confirmed by his much condemned answer to the South Carolina commissioners. He declined to reinforce the forts in Charleston harbor, "relying on the honor of South Carolinians that they will not be assaulted while they remain in their present condition." He assumed, also, that he, as president, had no power to take action; that the whole dispute was to be submitted to Congress. But he said in unequivocal language, "if South Carolina should take any of these forts, she will then become the assailant in war against the United States."

The two presidents agreed in pursuing a policy intended to preserve peace rather than to precipitate war. On account of the insufficiency of the army and navy, both considered an attempt to reinforce Fort Sumter futile. Lincoln, however, determined to *provision* it. Both still believed that the Union could be preserved intact and the breach could be healed by peaceable measures. Both, accordingly, showed long-sufferance toward a rebellious people, which was born not of traitorous sympathy nor of cowardly indecision, but of a magnanimous determination to save the South from the consequence of her blind folly, and the whole nation from the horrors of an internecine war.

The truth of history and justice to two distinguished men require a statement not only of points of agreement, but, also, of points of difference. As men, they must be placed under two incomparable categories. Buchanan, leaving office, enfeebled by age and distracted by ruthless criticisms, belonged to a passing era. Lincoln, entering

office in the maturity of manhood and borne up by the enthusiasm of a party lately come into power, belonged to a new order. Buchanan was a loyal Democrat, Lincoln a Whig and a Republican. Buchanan not only stood for non-interference with slavery where it was, but for its right to go where it was not. Lincoln disclaimed any intention to abolish slavery, but he was unalterably opposed to its extension into new territory. Buchanan was in sympathy with the doctrine of State Rights, the Lecompton Constitution and the Dred Scott Decision. Lincoln won his presidential spurs in waging unremitting war against these measures. Buchanan was not an avowed opponent of slavery. Lincoln considered it a necessary evil and hoped for its extirpation. Buchanan was elected before secession by a solid South; Lincoln was elected by an almost solid North and inaugurated after secession. Buchanan was the victim of a treacherous cabinet; Lincoln chose his advisors in full view of the situation. Buchanan had to meet secession in its incipency with a nation perplexed and dumfounded; Lincoln came into office after the Confederate States had formed a provisional government and sentiment was rapidly crystallizing on both sides. Buchanan received the South Carolina Commissioners and held that the initiative for the settlement of the trouble was vested in Congress and not in the executive. Lincoln, warned by Buchanan's experience, ignored the commissioners of the Confederacy and affirmed his right to defend and protect the government. Buchanan denied the right of states to secede, but also of the Federal government to coerce; Lincoln denied the right to secede and claimed the constitutional right to coerce.

Long after these statements are torn to shreds in the discussion of the coming hour, the question as to what both *should* have done will remain an insoluble crux for



the statesmen, the military officers and the historians for generations to come.

The second stage of Lincoln's administration opened with the firing on Fort Sumter—the shot which “echoed around the world” and “brought all the free States to their feet as one man.” The time for patient forbearance and peaceable adjustment had expired. For Lincoln there could be but one policy, and that was the successful prosecution and speedy termination of the war and the restoration of the Union. Happily for the unification of the North, he kept inviolate his promise to his dissatisfied countrymen in the inaugural, that “the government would not assail them, and that there could be no conflict without being themselves the aggressors.” The secessionists, blind to their own interests, became the “assailants of the government, and forced upon the country the distinct issues, ‘immediate dissolution or blood.’” In the words of Emerson the attack on Fort Sumter “crystallized the North into a unit and the hope of mankind was saved.” Party limits were abolished. Mr. Douglas, supported by a million voters, voluntarily interviewed the president and pledged his support of the administration. Ancient feuds and bitter prejudices were forgotten under the impulse of a new enthusiasm and in the presence of a common danger.

The declaration of war was attended by problems innumerable. An empty treasury had to be replenished. Neither the army nor the navy was prepared for efficient service. New officers had to be appointed and stationed. The neutrality of foreign powers had to be maintained, if their sympathy could not be won. The border States had to be conciliated and kept loyal to the government. The depressing effects of disastrous defeats had to be counteracted. The slow progress of the war chilled the first outburst of enthusiasm and cries were heard from North and

South for a cessation of hostilities. The president was the target of caustic criticisms, from domineering and disaffected members of his cabinet, arrogant military officers, a hostile minority in Congress, omniscient editors of metropolitan papers and partisan demagogues. But Lincoln attained heroic proportions in his treatment of Northern opposition and Southern rebellion. He took immediate and vigorous steps to meet the situation. His call for 75,000 militia and an extra session of Congress; his proclamation of a blockade of Southern ports, and a demand for 42,000 volunteers, with an increase in the regular army and in the naval forces, all followed in rapid succession in less than twenty days after Anderson capitulated. Men like Seward, Chase, Stanton and McClellan, who were firmly convinced that they were the agents of Providence for such a time as this to save the country from a well-meaning but incapable Executive, were quickly disillusioned and did obeisance to one who towered above them all. The different schemes of terminating the war, either by recognizing the insurgent States as an independent confederacy, or by granting a temporary truce for subsequent negotiations, or by restoring them to the Union with compromising concessions, were not for a moment considered by the Executive. His undaunted spirit inspired the second resolution of the Republican platform of 1864: "Resolved, That we approve the determination of the government of the United States not to compromise with rebels or to offer them any terms of peace, except such as may be based upon an unconditional surrender of their hostility and a return to their just allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the United States."

He could not be coerced by reckless radicals, restrained by timid conservatives, or disarmed by nerveless moderatists. With an almost overwhelming sense of responsibility,

with a heart-rending sympathy for his bleeding countrymen, with malice toward none and with charity for all, with a firm conviction of the righteousness of his cause and with an unflinching trust in the truth and justice of the Almighty Ruler of the nations, he was guided in word and deed by the dictates of his reason and conscience. He was not an agent of his cabinet or the servant of his party, but the ruler of a divided nation, whose sole purpose was the healing of divisions and the restoration of peace and prosperity. His practically unanimous nomination for a second term and sweeping victory at the polls, were not only a splendid vindication of his statesmanship, but a magnificent expression of supreme confidence in his matchless manhood by the American people.

Even the want of time will not permit us to omit the consideration of the consummate act of his life, by which more than by any other his name will be remembered forever—the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln was theoretically and morally an inveterate foe of slavery. His whole nature instinctively revolted from it. The practice of involuntary servitude he could not reconcile with his conception of Divine Justice, human equality and democratic government, but as a broadminded and farseeing statesman he was no advocate of immediate and arbitrary abolition. The responsibility of the existence of slavery he did not lay upon the South alone, but upon the whole country. In his annual message, December 1, 1862, he pleads for compensated emancipation on the ground that in a certain sense "the liberation of slaves is the destruction of property—property acquired by descent or by purchase, the same as any other property." Then he generously distributes the burden of responsibility. "It is no less true," he says, "for having been so often said that the people of the South are not more responsible for the original intro-

duction of this property than are the people of the North, and when it is remembered how unhesitatingly we all use cotton and sugar and share the profits of dealing in them, it may not be quite safe to say that the South had been more responsible than the North for its continuance. If, then, for a common object this property is to be sacrificed, is it not just that it will be done at a common charge?" Neither the Republican party nor its successful candidate dreamed of interference, directly or indirectly, with the institution of slavery in the States where it existed. In the political platform and in public utterances care was taken to distinguish Republicanism from abolitionism. While Lincoln more than once declared that slavery was the cause of the war, he none the less resented the imputation of the opposition, that war was waged to free the slaves. According to Mr. Davis, "the South did not fight for slavery but for equality." It is equally true that the North did not fight against slavery but against secession and for the Union. In reply to the anti-slavery zealots, among whom was the impatient editor of the New York *Tribune*, Lincoln clearly defines his position: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing the slave, I would do it, and, if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do it. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union, and what I forbear I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union."

Emancipation was forced upon the president, as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, by the necessities of war. In a short time the Federal camps were filled with forsaken and fugitive slaves. What was to be done with

them? The Government could neither return them to their masters nor keep them in bondage. The insurrectionists were encouraged and comforted in the hope that the border slave States, still loyal to the Union, would eventually cast their lot with the Confederacy and turn the tide of war in its favor. The ardent abolitionists impatiently urged liberation, while loyal and good men of all parties strenuously opposed such an extremity.

The scope of vision, the sense of justice, the subordination of personal views to the general welfare, the self-restraint and firm resolution of Lincoln, never stood out in bolder relief than in the solution of this momentous question. He studied and pondered the whole subject long and well. He guarded himself against the importunities of enthusiasts and was heedless of the fears and warnings of the opportunists. At last he was convinced that the hour had come and he resolved on liberation. He was not primarily actuated by moral motives but by military policy. Emancipation was a war measure. Still he moved cautiously and with a view of winning rather than alienating the slave holders. He pleads in vain for compensated emancipation. He peremptorily revoked General Hunter's unauthorized order of military emancipation. He signed the bill abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. He authorized the employment of contrabands in the army. He prepared a draft of a preliminary emancipation proclamation, giving due notice to all the States, whether in or out of the Union, that they might obtain the benefits of compensation. Only two members of his cabinet approved this measure. But with the impressive tone of a father addressing his son, he told them that he had not called them together for advice on issuing the proclamation. That matter was decided. But he desired their criticism and suggestions on the form of the document. Accepting the recommendation of Mr.

Seward, that the publication of it should be postponed until it would be supported by military success, he patiently waited for reports from the field. The fulness of time was at hand when the victory of Antietam revived the drooping courage of the North. After a second conference with the cabinet and a few slight modifications, the preliminary proclamation was announced, September 2, 1862. The die was cast. The Confederate States gave no sign of repentance and spurned the generous offer of compensation. True to his announcement, on January 1, 1863, he signed the final edict of freedom and the shackles fell from 4,000,000 bondmen forever. The decisive vote of the people in the next election, the series of successful battles under the leadership of Grant, Sherman and Sheridan, and the rapid disintegration of the Confederacy, not only ratified the proclamation but enabled the Thirty-eighth Congress to make it a part of the organic law of the land, as inscribed in the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution.

Perhaps the crowning act of his life, the full bloom of his generous, unresenting, pardoning and philanthropic soul, was a tentative message addressed to Congress, recommending that the slave States be offered a compensation of four hundred millions of dollars, upon condition that all rebellion should cease before April 1, 1865. Then the backbone of the rebellion had been broken. When men were thirsting for vengeance on a defeated foe; when they were about to lay stripes deep and long on the bare back of a rebellious people; then Lincoln had "charity for all and malice toward none." The cabinet, however, to a man disapproved the plan. With an expression of surprise and sorrow, coming like a cloud over his face, he folded and laid away the paper, and with a deep sigh he added: "You are all opposed to me and I will not send the message." His lenient policy was rejected. The war was fought to the

bitter end. The plans for the reconstruction of the impoverished, distracted, humiliated and embittered South, which were ripening in his mind, were defeated by the assassin's hand. When Lincoln fell, the rebellious States lost their most faithful friend—a friend who groaned and agonized in his soul because of their apostasy, and travailed and prayed for their return to the government of their fathers. When Lincoln fell, the great genius of American democracy breathed his last and one of the most distinguished sons of the race passed into the realm of the immortals. When the stricken chief lay cold in death, the leonine Stanton, who had borne with him the burdens of war, spoke the judgment of history: "There lies the most perfect ruler of men that the world has ever seen."

He solved the problem which baffled American statesmen for a century. He transformed the Declaration of Independence from a political theory to a national fact. He exalted the Constitution as the supreme and inexorable law of an indissoluble Union. He convinced the supercilious and skeptical monarchies of the world that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth. He broke the bonds of slavery and preserved the integrity of the nation.

We have traced his life from the cabin in the Western forests to the executive mansion at Washington, from the first sentence scribbled on a shovel by the hearth to the second inaugural, from the abolition sentiment uttered before the auction block in New Orleans to the Thirteenth Amendment. We have watched the successive steps in his career and read nearly all his recorded words, observed his treatment of men, friends and foes, and traced his administration of affairs in the dark days of the war until he died a martyr to the cause for which he lived. We have a feeling akin to that of the traveler who stands for the first

time before a towering peak of Switzerland. As his eye follows the outline of the monarch of the plain from base to summit, and his soul is lifted from the ephemeral to the eternal, he forgets the common clay, the flinty rock and the barren sides in the contemplation of the massive grandeur of the cloud-capped peak. Lincoln stands before us against a background of the vast and dim unknown, of the earth earthy yet with the glow of heaven on his brow, defying analysis, classification and interpretation—an incomparable and solitary personality.

When the fields of a nation were tinged with blood, when the demons of war stalked with hellish glee over the ruins of blooming gardens, golden harvests and thriving hamlets, and the cry of the widow and orphan filled the land, when victory was in his grasp and the plaudits of an exalted people were breaking forth—then Lincoln reveals the secret of his life in the words of his great second inaugural: “Fondly we hope, fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth built by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil, shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, ‘The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’ With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in—to bind up a nation’s wounds and care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.” Did ever Jewish prophet or Christian apostle, ancient father or modern reformer, utter a sublimer faith in Divine Providence and plead with a



tenderer love for Christian charity? But the feeble accents of sober prose must yield to the keener vision, the finer touch and the subtler tones of the poetic muse, to give due honor to America's great emancipator:

“When the Norn Mother saw the Whirlwind Hour  
Gathering and darkening as it hurried on,  
She left the Heaven of Heroes and came down  
To make a man to meet the mighty need.  
She took the tried clay of the common road—  
Clay warm yet with the genial heat of earth,  
Dashed through it all a strain of prophecy,  
Tempered the heap with touch of mortal tears;  
Then mixed a laughter with the serious stuff.

The color of the ground was in him, the red earth,  
The tang and odor of the primal things—  
The rectitude and patience of the rocks;  
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;  
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;  
The justice of the rain that loves all leaves;  
The pity of the snow that hides all scars;  
The loving kindness of the wayside well;  
The tolerance and equity of light  
That gives as freely to the shrinking weed  
As to the great oak flaring to the wind—  
To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn  
That shoulders out the sky.

And so he came.  
From prairie cabin up to Capitol,  
One fair ideal led our chieftain on,  
Forever more he burned to do his deed  
With the fine stroke and gesture of a king.  
He built the rail pile as he built the State,  
Pouring his splendid strength through every blow.  
The conscience of him testing every stroke,  
To make his deed the measure of a man.

So came the Captain with the mighty heart;  
And when the step of earthquake shook the house,

Wresting the rafters from their ancient hold,  
He held the ridgepole up and spiked again  
The rafters of the Home. He held his place—  
Held the long purpose like a growing tree—  
Held on through blame and faltered not at praise—  
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down  
As when a kingly cedar, green with boughs,  
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,  
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.”

—MARKHAM.



